



# In Speech, Nasrallah Explains Hezbollah's Role in War with Israel

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*On November 3, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah gave his first public remarks since Hamas's October 7 attack. Superficially, the speech was intended to recognize "martyrs." But it also served to put Hamas's attack in the broader context of Iran's and, according to Nasrallah, the entire region's ambition to eradicate Israel. Although Nasrallah went to pains to describe 10/7 as a "Palestinian" operation, he also wanted to make sure that Hezbollah got credit for doing "more than it did in 2006" and signal that it will continue its current cross-border attacks and but remain below the threshold of opening the northern front, for now.*

*His remarks suggest he is trying to thread the needle and keep Hezbollah's options open by supporting Hamas and warning Israel and the United States – particularly noting that the war was the fault of the United States and for which it must be held accountable.*

*Hezbollah remains relatively restrained mainly because of direction from Tehran – for whom Hezbollah is key to responding in the event of an attack on Iran – as well as risks to the group due to the Lebanese casualties that result from Hezbollah's escalation.*

## What Happened?

- On November 3, the normally outspoken Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, delivered his first speech since Hamas's October 7 attack.
- Despite emphasizing that the 10/7 attack was a "100% Palestinian decision," he emphasized that it serves the benefits of the whole region, described Hezbollah's engagement as "more than it did in 2006," warned that further escalation remains "a possibility," and threatened and taunted the United States, intoning that "those who defeated you in the 1980s are still here."
  - » Nasrallah's speech opened with greetings to martyrs, and noted that more about them will be shared on Martyr's Day, which takes place on November 11 (perhaps indicating that he may offer further remarks then).
  - » He began by focusing on the October 7 operation, which he described as the "result of 100% Palestinian decision" and as "entirely Palestinian, for Palestine, its cause, its people, and is not related to any regional or international issue."
  - » He noted that Iran "openly supports the resistance movements in Lebanon, Palestine, and the region, but it does not exert control over their leadership."
  - » Nasrallah listed four reasons for Hamas's 10/7 attack: "the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails; the issue of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem; the blockade on Gaza for nearly twenty years; and the dangers facing the West Bank, including Israeli settlements and daily killings and arrests."

- » He also made it clear that the main culprit for the war is the United States (even mentioning the attack on Hiroshima at the end of World War II), and that “Israel is only an instrument to carry it out.”
  - “The United States is entirely responsible for the war in Gaza,” he noted, and explained that militias attacking American troops in Iraq and Syria are doing so because “America must be held accountable.”
- » The war itself is not only that of Hamas, or even only in the interest of Iran and Hezbollah, but, in Nasrallah’s telling, advances the interests of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon by helping in the eradication of Israel.
- » Nasrallah made sure to emphasize that Hezbollah “entered the battle on October 8” and clarified that regarding “those who are asking Hezbollah to engage in open warfare, what is appearing on the border may appear moderate, but that is not the case. And we will not be content with this.” He explained that what Hezbollah is currently doing on the border is more than it did in 2006, and is “a real battle that is only felt by those in the border areas, the fighters, and the residents. It is a battle of a different kind, in terms of its circumstances, means, and targets. That’s why such a large number of brave individuals have fallen as martyrs.”
- » On the future course of the war, Nasrallah indicated proxies in Iraq and Yemen are ready “to enter a new stage,” including mentioning Houthi projectiles “will reach Eilat and the south of Palestine and Israeli military bases.”
- » He did not rule out further escalation, describing a broader war as “a possibility, and the enemy must keep that in mind.” Nasrallah indicated this may happen depending on “the development of the situation in Gaza and the behavior of the Zionist enemy towards Lebanon,” clarifying further “you will make the worst mistake if you attempt an offensive against Lebanon.”
  - He dismissed the presence of the U.S. carrier strike groups – “these threats will change nothing. We have started our work on this front.”
  - He further threatened – referencing the bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut 40 years ago – “those who defeated you in the early 1980s are still here, along with their sons and grandsons.”

## Why Is It Important?

- The overall goal of the speech was mainly to remain relevant (Nasrallah had not delivered a speech since October 7).
  - » He went to great lengths to both connect the 10/7 attack to the Iranian regime’s aims and activities throughout the region as well as stress Hezbollah’s almost immediate, and greater than it might appear engagement in the conflict. This suggests Nasrallah felt the need to show that Hezbollah is critical to Hamas’s efforts, if not – according to his remarks – a part of it.

- » His emphasis on the Palestinian-focused nature of the attack (including his point that Iran and Hezbollah have no control over the leadership of Hamas) do not rule out Hezbollah and Iran’s involvement, support and coordination of the attack. These comments moreover might have also been intended to frame Hamas’s operation as advancing the cause of the Gazan people.
- » The remarks do not suggest an immediate intention by Hezbollah to formally open the northern front with all Hezbollah’s capacity – knowing the number of casualties it has already endured and how unpopular the blowback to it from the Lebanese people will be as a result.
- » That said, the language about a broader war being “a possibility” most certainly suggests Hezbollah and the Iranian regime, together with Hamas leadership (especially those based in Lebanon) will actively coordinate in the coming days to determine the manner of further escalation short of fully opening a northern front (with the latter likely inviting a U.S. response, as Nasrallah indicated).
- Hezbollah remains relatively restrained mainly because of direction from Tehran – for whom Hezbollah is key to responding in the event of an attack on Iran – as well as risks to the group due to the Lebanese casualties that result from Hezbollah’s escalation.
- The setting of and pageantry surrounding the speech, delivered via video to a sizeable crowd, were themselves telling.
  - » There were mostly Hezbollah flags, a few Lebanese ones, and even fewer Palestinian ones.
  - » Reporting on the ground from a suburb south of Beirut, [L’Orient Today](#) noted “images of militant operations and Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel are displayed on a giant screen. To the right of the screen, text is displayed, reading, ‘Martyrs on the path to Jerusalem’...[and to] the left, the faces of around 50 party members who have been killed since the beginning of the conflict between Israel and Hamas on Oct. 7...”
  - » Nasrallah’s remarks were preceded by homages to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei as well as “the martyrs of the resistance,” curses to the United States and its allies and Israel, the playing of the anthem of Lebanon, and a recitation of the Quranic chapter of al-Isra, which tells the story of the Prophet Muhammad’s night journey to the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, from where he reportedly ascended to Heaven – connected to Hamas’s name for its October 7 operation, “al-Aqsa Flood.”
  - » Nasrallah’s appeared in the black turban worn by the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, and a black cloak, which is likely not only out of mourning (an especially holy exercise for Shiites, who annually commemorate the killing of the Prophet’s grandson, Husayn), but the combination of the black turban and cloak together have associations with the Prophet’s own garb and mystical visits he reportedly received. Nasrallah’s dress is likely intended to summon these connotations and assert his lineage and position.